

Unit of Study: Small Moments, Intermediate
Content Overview
Judy Leff

Unit Length: 6 weeks

Introduction – Small moments writing allows students to explode a moment in time and add concrete details that animate their text. Through the teaching of small moments writing, students learn to avoid the “bed to bed” stories that bore readers by telling rather than showing.

Mentor Text List for My Study:

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

A Chair For My Mother by Vera B. Williams

Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats

Joshua’s Night Whispers

I’m In Charge of Celebrations by Byrd Baylor

OR

Selected Excerpts and student examples (**pages 1-6**)

Week by Week Overview:

Week 1: Develop understanding of Small Moment writing through Mentor Text Inquiry/
Begin brainstorming personal small moments

Week 2: Continue Mentor Text Inquiry and brainstorming/Define traits of SM writing

Week 3: Explode a moment/begin drafting seed ideas from writer’s notebook

Week 4: Explode a moment (going deeper)/ Revision

Week 5: Revise: Leads and conclusions

Week 6: Edit-Publish-Assess

Extended Bibliography – Small Moments Picture Books

Salt Hands by Jane Chelsea Aragon	Do Like Kyla by Angela Johnson
Saturday and Teacakes by Lester Laminack	Trevor’s Wiggly-Wobbly Tooth by Lester Laminack
The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn	Jake’s 100th Day of School by Lester Laminack
Chicken Sunday by Patricia Polacco	Big Mama’s by Donald Crews
Baghead by Jarrett J. Krosoczka	Shortcut by Donald Crews
My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother by Patricia Polacco	Max’s Dragon Shirt by Rosemary Wells
Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman	The Paper Boy by Dav Pilkey
Koala Lou by Mem Fox	Fireflies by Julie Brinckloe
The Leaving Morning by Angela Johnson	

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Week	Mini-Lessons	Student Assignment
1	<p>Mentor Text Inquiry: (2-3 texts from Content Overview list)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What is the author doing? ◆ How is the author stretching the moment? <p>Develop Traits of a Small Moment through MT: Write small (stay in the moment), write in first person (I), show don't tell, use dialogue, show thinking and emotion, use strong lead and ending, be short and to the point, build suspense, appeal to the senses</p>	<p>Writer's notebook work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Brainstorm personal small moments inspired by MT: person, place, event, moment in time, specific emotion ◆ Develop a list of traits of small moment writing through study of MT (see column 1).
2	<p>Continue Mentor Text Inquiry</p> <p>Key Concept for Mini-Lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Zoom-in – (<u>Zoom</u> by Banyai) <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Watermelon/Seed ideas (Calkins article, pages 7-14) <p>The author could have written about ...but instead focused on...</p>	<p>Writer's notebook work continued:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Brainstorm personal small moments inspired by MT: person, place, event, moment in time, specific emotion ◆ Develop a list of traits of small moment writing through study of MT.
3	<p>Mini Lesson: Bill Peet excerpt (pages 15-16)</p> <p>Strategy: Explode a moment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Focus: What is the BIG moment? ◆ Freeze and sketch ◆ storyboard the moment, 3-4 frames <p>Mini-Lesson: Magnified Moment Brainstorming handout (page 17)</p> <p>Strategy: Make the moment last:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What is the BIG moment? ◆ Add 5 details ◆ Freewrite <p>Student example (pages 18-20)</p>	<p>Explode a moment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Practice Exploding a Moment with personal piece(s) ◆ Quick write from Explosion(s) ◆ Narrow down quick writes to one piece to develop ◆ Meet in Peer Response Groups (PRG) <p>Make the moment last:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Practice strategy with draft used above ◆ Free write/draft ◆ PRG

4	Mini Lesson: Tips for Exploding the Moment (page 21): Model strategies by color coding student piece: Numb Fear (page 22) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Thought Shots (red) ◆ Snap Shots (yellow) ◆ Dialogue (green) 	Revisit draft to add/check for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Thought shots ◆ Snap shots ◆ Dialogue ◆ PRG
5	Mini Lessons: Leads and Conclusions from Mentor Text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Categorize list of Magnified Moment Leads (page 23): Question, descriptive, suspense, dialogue, etc. ◆ Conclusions (Stay close to the moment, don't move away): Next thing that happened, say what you thought or felt in the moment, refer back to lead, sum up 	Experiment with draft by trying several: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ leads ◆ conclusions ◆ PRG
6	Mini Lesson: Editing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use mentor sentence strategy to develop flexibility in sentence structure, variety, use of punctuation Polish, Self-Assess, Publish <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Present checklist/rubric to self-assess: Magnified Moment Evaluation Checklist (page 24) Magnified Moment Rubric (page 25) 	Student editing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Experiment with drafts to vary sentence structure, length, correct use of punctuation, correct use of tense ◆ PRG ◆ Use checklist and self-assess for publication

Note: The use of the term Small Moments and Magnified Moments is interchangeable.

MY LIFE IN DOG YEARS

Gary Paulsen

We were walking along a trail where the grass came down next to the dirt in tight clumps. I had gotten ahead of Snowball when she stopped to examine a pile of buffalo droppings. As always, I was barefoot, and I was shuffling along. Two steps ahead I saw a pretty colored ribbon lying along the trail. Another step closer and I saw it had moved. It wasn't a ribbon but a snake, one that—I was to learn later—was deadly. Some involuntary signal made me start to jump but I was too close. I was almost on the snake by that time. It was about to strike when a flash of black fur passed my leg and Snowball grabbed the snake just in back of the head and with a quick flick broke its neck.

It was all over in half a second.

I stood, shaking slightly, while Snowball made sure it was dead, threw it off to the side of the trail and continued on, stopping to look back, one ear up and the other down, her black face questioning, wanting to know why I wasn't coming. At last I regained some control and followed her.

6.

Querétaro

Because we're kids, things happen and someone forgets to tell us, or they tell us and we forget. I don't know which. When I hear the word "Querétaro," I start to shudder, hope everyone won't remember.

—Cut it.

—All of it? Father asks.

—All, the Grandmother says. —It will grow back thicker, you'll see.

Father nods and the beautician obeys. Father always does whatever the Grandmother orders, and in two surprised snips I am turned into a *pelona*.

Snip. Snip.

The twin braids I've had since as far back as I can remember, the ones so long I can sit on them, now lie like dead snakes on the floor. Father wraps them in his handkerchief and tucks them in his pocket.

Snip, snip, snip. The scissors whisper mean things in my ears.

In the mirror an ugly wolf-girl is howling.

All the kilometers to Mexico City.

Especially because the brothers laugh and point and call me a boy.

—Oh, brother! What a *chillona* you turned out to be. Now what? Mother asks.

—What could be worse than being a boy?

—Being a girl! Rafa shouts. And everyone in the car laughs even harder.

Sandra Cisneros

During one game in that half season I played second base—apparently no one told the manager I was going to be a major league shortstop. Our opponent was the Red Sox. The batter hit a ground ball right at me. I crouched, feet spread, glove ready, as I had been taught in the *Times Herald* baseball school. I could hear the ball crunching along the sandy ground. It hit my glove—but not the pocket. Instead it glanced off the fat leather thumb and rolled on behind me.



Shortstop, Green Sox
(age 12, 1953).

Jerry Spinelli

My first error!
I was heartbroken. I stomped my foot. I pounded my fist into the stupid glove.

Once
I saw a triple rainbow
that ended in a canyon
where I'd been
the day before.

I was halfway up a hill
standing
in a drizzle of rain.

It was almost dark
but I wouldn't go in
(because of the rainbows,
of course),
and there
at the top of the hill
a jackrabbit
was standing
up on his hind legs,
perfectly still,
looking straight
at that same
triple
rainbow.

4
I may be
the only person in the world
who's seen
a rabbit
standing in the mist
quietly watching
three rainbows.

That's worth
a celebration
any time.

I wrote it down
and drew the hill
and the rabbit
and the rainbow
and me.

Now
August ninth
is Rainbow Celebration Day.



The second I stepped into the car, I sensed something wrong. I immediately realized she had tear stains on her right cheek. I pretended not to notice and said, “Hi mom, I had a good day at school.” “So can we go to Target to buy me a birthday present?”

“Yes,” my mother replied lifelessly. Then, without warning she started to cry.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“Someone very dear to me died today,” she replied tearfully.

“Who,” I asked trembling. “Do I know him or her?”

“It was your Uncle Gene,” my mother said in a near whisper. She was crying harder now and I followed suit. I let her know that Target could wait. I felt my mom’s pain as we flooded the car with emotions.

The day I would think to be the happiest of the year, my birthday, God decides to steal my uncle from the family. We drove to Target anyway, in silence.

Major League Pressure

Pressure, major, major pressure. Here I am, it’s the fifth inning and I’m one of the youngest pitchers in the league facing the best team in the majors. I watch as the fourth batter steps up to the plate. I look around the field to make sure everyone is ready. I look back at the batter. He has an evil grin on his face and fire in his eyes, an “I’m going to hit it out of the park,” sort of look. I get the sign and start to sweat. I begin my motion and think, “I’ve got to throw this pitch well, I’ve got to throw this pitch well.” As I release the ball, it spins slowly toward the batter and his eyes light up like light bulbs. I pray that the ball curves. As the batter swings, the ball arcs out and away from the bat. In my mind I hear the whiff of the bat cutting through the air. I got this guy, this time.

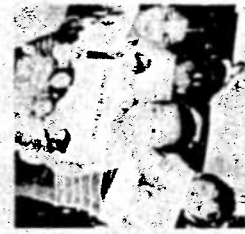
Example:

There is a box in your attic. Write about what you might find when you open it.

I crept up the creaking attic stairs, gripping the box cutter in my left hand and sliding up the hand-rail with my right. With each slow step I could feel the tension building, twisting inside my stomach like some caged animal. What would I find when I opened the mysterious box my dead aunt had left there? How could I know if the promise she made me was really true? What would Mother think when she realized that I knew the darkest secret about her childhood in New Jersey?

My knees buckled, and I could feel a cloud of sadness wash over me as my hand touched the bronze doorknob at the top of the stairs. Was I ready to step into that dark room? What would be left of my childhood once I knew the truth?

As the door creaked open, a blast of musty air slapped me in the face like an old memory that you just couldn't forget no matter how hard you tried. My eyes scanned the room. There was a pile of old busted chairs, a stack of moldy books with ripped out pages strewn like leaves across the floor, and, beyond it all in the far corner, sitting on a tray table, was the box that held my destiny.



DISCOVERING SMALL MOMENTS, AS ANGELA MIGHT

GETTING READY

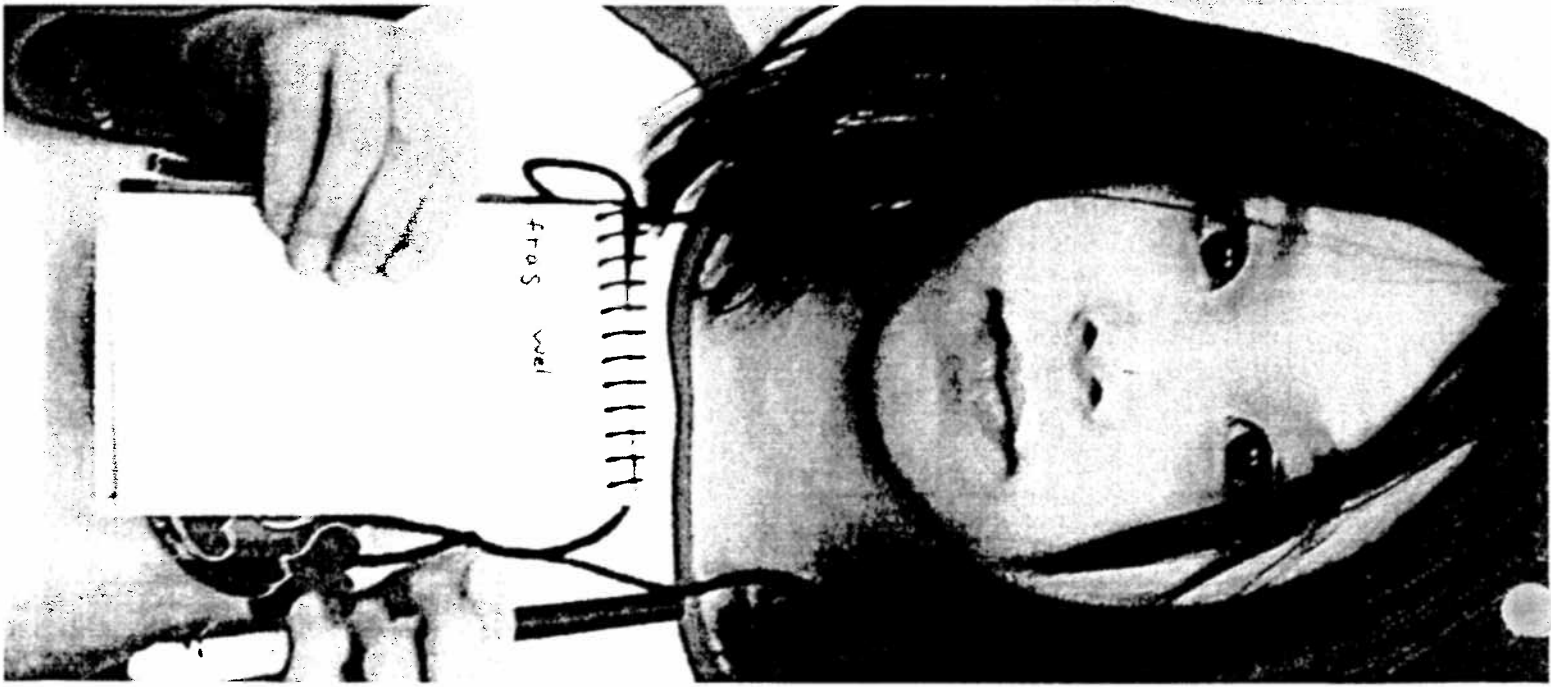
- Joshua's *Night Whispers*
 - 2" x 1" tiny topics notepads, one for each child; buy spirals and cut them in thirds
 - Construction paper that will fit neatly on the covers of the tiny topics notepads; write each child's name on a cover and paper clip these onto the spiral notebooks; have extras on hand
 - Markers, pens, glue sticks, and other materials for decorating covers
 - Paper for writing stories
 - Letter to parents explaining the tiny topics notepads
 - Books to read aloud
- preceding the minilesson: *The Other Way to Listen, The Wise Woman and Her Secret*
- Large, clear packing tape
 - See CD-ROM for resources

THIS SESSION REPRESENTS THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH for your author study. You will want to create ribbon-cutting excitement, and to make your children feel as if they are embarking on a whole new chapter in their writing lives. This will be a challenge because for the first few days of this study you'll ask children to resume writing *Small Moment* narratives as they have been.

You'll want to consolidate the instructional ground you have already traveled so that this unit's new work can build on (rather than replace) previous instruction. Then your author study of Angela Johnson can help children make reading-writing connections.

When you introduce Angela Johnson, you'll stress not only that she's great, but that she writes just like your children do. You will want your children to adore Angela Johnson and also to identify with her. Then you'll encourage children to follow Angela Johnson's model by living wide-awake, attentive lives, and by recording tiny topics in their new tiny notepads. This notepad will embody your new emphasis on living like real authors. By using Angela Johnson to encourage students to slow down and take note of their own lived lives, you'll help students write better.

In this session, then, you'll help students notice that Angela Johnson finds tiny moments to write about, and you'll help them try to do that themselves, as they have in the past.





THE MINILESSON

Connection

Tell children that you recently found an author who writes just like them.

"I was in the town library this weekend and I found this book," Amanda held up *Joshua's Night Whispers*. "I read it, and I thought, 'This is just like the books you kids write!' Let me read it to you." Amanda read the forty-three-word book lovingly.

In the nighttime the wind brings night whispers, so I follow them . . . past my toybox . . . and out my door . . . then down the hall. Night whispers all around. At last Daddy's holding me warm and safe and we listen together to the night whispers.

"When I find a book that's a lot like books I'm trying to write, I sometimes say—'Wait a minute. Maybe this author could be a teacher, a mentor for me. I could see how she does this kind of writing, because I'm trying to do the exact same thing!'"

"I suggest that for the next few weeks, we take Angela Johnson as our mentor, our teacher, and we try to learn from her (because we're a lot like her). What do you think?" The children nodded with vigor.

Reread the author's work, pointing out that the author has written a text that is like what the children write. In this instance, Angela Johnson has written a Small-Moment story like those the children have been writing.

"I'm going to reread this book and this time when you listen, notice that it's a Small-Moment story just like the stories you've been writing." Amanda reread aloud *Joshua's Night Whispers*.

In the nighttime the wind brings night whispers, so I follow them . . . past my toy box . . . and out my door . . . then down the hall. Night whispers all around. At last Daddy's holding me warm and safe and we listen together to the night whispers.



Amanda and I selected Angela Johnson because Joshua's Night Whispers is a perfect exemplar text for Small-Moment writing.

We don't begin the unit by laying out all Angela Johnson's books and saying, "Go to it!" Instead, we draw children close around this single text. If our author study had been Ezra Jack Keats, we'd focus similarly on *The Snowy Day* and if it was Donald Crews, we'd look at *Shortcut*.

Amanda gets right to the heart of this unit and does so using simple, straight words "I suggest we take Angela Johnson as our mentor." She doesn't detour into a long definition of mentor but does include a synonym at just the right moment.

We again tell children how we want them to listen before we read aloud in a minilesson.

Tell children that today they need to choose topics and get started on new pieces. Explain that when you have a mentor author (as they now have Angela Johnson), she teaches you lessons like how to choose topics and how to get started.

"We were on vacation so we missed writing workshop for two weeks.

I know you all are dying to write. So, today we'll choose topics so we can start our new writing pieces. Today I want to teach you that a mentor author like Angela Johnson can give us tips on how to come up with ideas for writing."

Teaching

Tell children that Angela probably first thought of a big general topic and then decided to focus on a tiny aspect of that topic.

"I'm pretty sure that when Angela sits down to write (like we'll do soon) she probably has a few big, huge topics on her mind. I think of them as watermelon topics." Amanda used her hands to visually illustrate the big size of a watermelon topic. "She probably thinks 'I could write about my vacation'" Amanda's hands showed this would be a watermelon topic, "or all about my son Joshua (another watermelon topic). . . ."

"Angela could have written *everything* she had to say about Joshua: how he found an acorn that looked like a man on his walk yesterday, how he loved to make pancakes shaped like a J. . . ." Amanda's voice accentuated that this would have resulted in a scattered, on-and-on, list-like sort of piece. "But Angela decided not to write about a watermelon topic—like 'all about' her son—and instead she took just one tiny seed, one tiny topic. So she wrote just about the time when Joshua heard night noises and got out of bed."

You will want to decide how the author you have selected can help children with the very beginning of their writing process: You won't want to say, "Angela Johnson wrote about the sounds of one evening and you can write about night sounds too," because you are hoping children learn strategies (not topics) from authors they admire. You could help children emulate Angela's process of mining her ordinary home life for topics: Amanda decided to focus not on helping children know what they could write about, but on reminding them to zoom in on tiny, specific topics

This metaphor has been helpful in lots of K–1 classrooms, but a few children interpret the term *watermelon topic* literally and write about watermelons and seeds! Be mindful that metaphors can be confusing to children who are English language learners. Don't bypass metaphor, but do explicitly tell them what you mean: "You know how watermelons are big? Well, when I say a 'watermelon topic' I mean a big topic such as. . . ."

Whispering, Anthony said, "Yeah, 'cause my dad put me on his shoulders! Then I could reach."

Link

Show students that writers record their ideas. Give students tiny topics notepads in which to collect tiny details they might write about.

"I was thinking you all might want to live writerly lives just like Angela. I've got something very special for each of you." Amanda held up one of the tiny notepads. "Before we can write in these tiny topics notepads, we need to make them our very own, so I have a cover page that I'll give to each of you. Today let's decorate our covers, and then I'll attach the cover to your tiny topics notepad. If you have more time after that, you can open up your tiny topics notepad and write the story idea you just had or others. Then you can get a booklet and begin to write one of your stories."

"So let's fancy up these tiny topics notepads. Would the table monitor from the red table come and get your covers and notepads? The table monitor from the blue table. . . ."

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING POINT

Intervene to remind children to jot ideas for topics in their notepads—and not to write whole stories there.

Once a few children had finished decorating their covers and were ready to write, Amanda reiterated what goes in the notepads. "Writers, may I stop you? Alissa's notepad is all set to go, and now she's going to write 'almost falling on the ice' on one page because that's one tiny topic she could write. She already wrote 'too small coat' because last night she tried on her winter coat and the sleeves came to here on her. So right on this page," Amanda said, holding up Alissa's notepad, "she wrote 'too small coat.' If she decides to turn that into a story, will she write the whole story here, in her tiny topics notepad?"

"Noooooo!"

"You're right. She'd get a booklet like this for her whole story, right?"

It is important to notice whether any children have taken your metaphor literally and are talking about watermelon and homegarden melon. If this happens, be patient and continue to move between the metaphor and the concrete meaning, as when you say, "Angela Johnson didn't write 'all about' her son, she didn't write about a huge watermelon-sized topic, did she?"

All the kids won't totally "get" the idea of what to put into the notepads (a phrase capturing their topic idea, as in "knocking down ticks") versus the four-page booklets (the Small-Moment story, like those they've written all year). You may need to confer or lead strategy lessons to help them. For now, they will have no trouble getting started decorating their covers.

As children complete the illustrations on the cover of their books, use clear packing tape to tape the covers onto the books in a way that effectively laminates them to the existing spiral notebook covers.

It is very important that the notepads are tiny. We often buy very small spirals (with wire loops along the side) and cut each of these into three even-smaller notepads. In the next session, we use lanyards to turn these into necklaces.

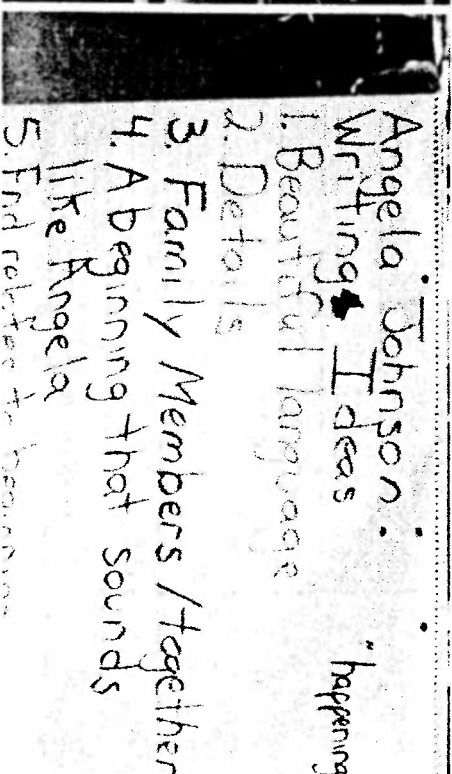


TIME TO CONFER

You will have your hands full today. For ten minutes, your children will be absorbed in an effort to decorate their covers. You can supervise and manage, supplying new pieces of construction paper to children who worry that they messed up their first efforts and taping completed covers onto the spirals. While you do this, talk up the purposes of the tool. "Once you're done, you'll want to carry this with you everywhere just like I do with my notepad. Yesterday, I was in the midst of patting my dog and all of a sudden I got an idea for a tiny topic." See the conferences cited at right from the *Conferring with Primary Writers* book.

As soon as children begin to write, you'll need to guard against them writing their whole stories in these notebooks. If you catch a child filling up page after page, that's a good sign that they're doing just that—race over immediately and remind the child to record just a note, rather than the whole story. If you don't do this, the notepad will be filled up in no time. If a lot of children reach this point, convene a strategy lesson or bring Session II's mid-workshop teaching point into today.

Most of your conferring time will be usurped by the mechanics of today, but if you have chances for real conferences, use the Small Moment conferences as guides.



These conferences in *The Conferring Handbook* may be especially helpful today

- ▶ "Will You Touch Each Page and Say What You'll Write?"
- ▶ "Let Me Help You Put Some Words Down"
- ▶ "As a Reader, I'll Love to Hear More About That"

Also, if you have *Conferring with Primary Writers*, you may want to refer the following conferences:

- ▶ A Strategy Lesson on Keeping a Tiny Topics Notepad
- ▶ "Are You Stuck?"



AFTER-THE-WORKSHOP SHARE

Show the class the writing a few students did. Use these examples to teach how to use the tiny notepads

"Many of you have been showing me the tiny topics you recorded in your tiny topics notepad. We know Angela Johnson probably wrote, 'Joshua—up in the night' in her tiny topics notepad. Ben wrote, 'purring on the chair.' That note reminds him of a whole story about his cat coming to sleep beside him. Rachael wrote, 'Mom left' and that topic reminds her of a Small-Moment story about when she thought her Mom had left without saying good-bye. Eric wrote, 'cherry pie' and I can almost taste it right now!"

POST-WORKSHOP TEACHING POINT

Convene students. Reread *Joshua's Night Whispers*. Have students talk with their partners about how Angela probably lived her life to write this book.

"Before you go, I'm going to reread Angela Johnson's *Joshua's Night Whispers* one more time. This time, I want you to think about the kind of life Angela probably lives to write like this because before you go home, I want you to think about living, tonight, like an author."

Have students think about how Angela Johnson lives her life in order to write as she does. Elicit a few responses.

Amanda read the book aloud. "What kind of life do you suppose she lives to write like this?"

Damon said, "It's a good story."

"Yes, it is a great story. But Damon, what I asked was this. What kind of life do you suppose Angela lives to write like this?"

"That she loves her family?"

"That's a smart observation. How do you suppose she remembers tiny moments like this one?"

"Maybe she puts stuff in a notepad to tell what her kid does."

We actually don't have any evidence that Angela Johnson keeps a 2" x 1" notepad for topic ideas, but she's assured me that we can take this poetic license! Children benefit from multiple and very specific examples of the sort of thing you hope they will do

Notice this is a Before-you-go-home minilesson! The architecture—connection, teaching, active engagement link—is almost, but not quite, present. At the start of this intervention, Amanda names what she'll teach and how this fits into their prior work

We do children no favors if we ask a question and then accept responses that can't address the stated question. Notice how Amanda handles Damon's responses.

"Or maybe she sits in her house and thinks about Joshua."

"It's like she remembers everything. She remembers all the noises and places he went to find them."

Tell students what you heard them saying.

"I heard you guys say that Angela really loves her family and pays attention to them. She noticed how her son climbs out of bed to find the night noises. What Damon said is so true—it is like she remembers everything! Writers do find stories in the little everyday things like going to bed and waking up. They find stories in the morning sun, the lost mitten that no one can find when it is time to leave for school, and the walk in the rain with one's sister."

Remind students to watch for little things that could become stories and to record these in their tiny topics notepads.

"We're going to be leaving for home soon and tonight I have an assignment for you. I want you to live like writers. Today we learned that writers like Angela Johnson write with details because they live with details."

"Collect little, tiny details that you can later turn into stories. For example, earlier I looked at those bird tracks out our window and I wrote, 'bird footprints.' So tonight, look at the small things in your house and write a few that matter into your tiny topics notepads. Be like Angela Johnson. Listen and look closely. Tomorrow you'll all write with details because tonight you'll live with details."

Details convey worlds more than generalizations. Amanda says, "Writers find stories in the lost mitten . . . the walk in the rain . . ." rather than simply saying "Writers find stories in small details."

Notice that the Active Engagement phase of the minilesson is missing. Amanda is trying to set the children up to work well at home, but she wants this minilesson to go more quickly than the one earlier today.

The parallel construction in this sentence makes it easier to absorb. Writers write with details because they live with details.



IF CHILDREN NEED MORE TIME

Although most minilessons are tightly organized to introduce,

demonstrate, and provide practice on a very specific skill, today's minilesson—like most first minilessons in a unit—instead provides a big-picture overview.

You'll "unpack" this minilesson over the days that follow. Among other things:

- You'll want to keep your own tiny topics notepad and be very public about the times when you write in it. If the goldfish dies, tell children that you realize you could write a story about this and record it in your tiny topics notepad. If someone says something funny or sweet or worth remembering say, "Can you guys wait one second, I have to do something" and pull your notepad out without making an explicit lesson or obvious fuss over what you're doing. They'll notice all the more!
- Meanwhile, you can also give children opportunities throughout the day to identify watermelon topics and seed-like tiny topics for each other. When they come in from recess, say, "If Sophia wanted to write about recess, would that be a watermelon topic or a seed-like tiny topic? What about if she wrote about swinging so high she almost touched the tree branch—would that be a watermelon topic or a seed-like tiny topic?"
- The children's books mentioned in Getting Ready will fit perfectly into this minilesson. They are precious jewels—don't miss the chance to share them with your children.

BILL PEET

An Autobiography

I do remember catching one full-grown frog, and I remember it well because of a snake. The frog was swimming near the surface of the creek unaware that I was only a few feet away.

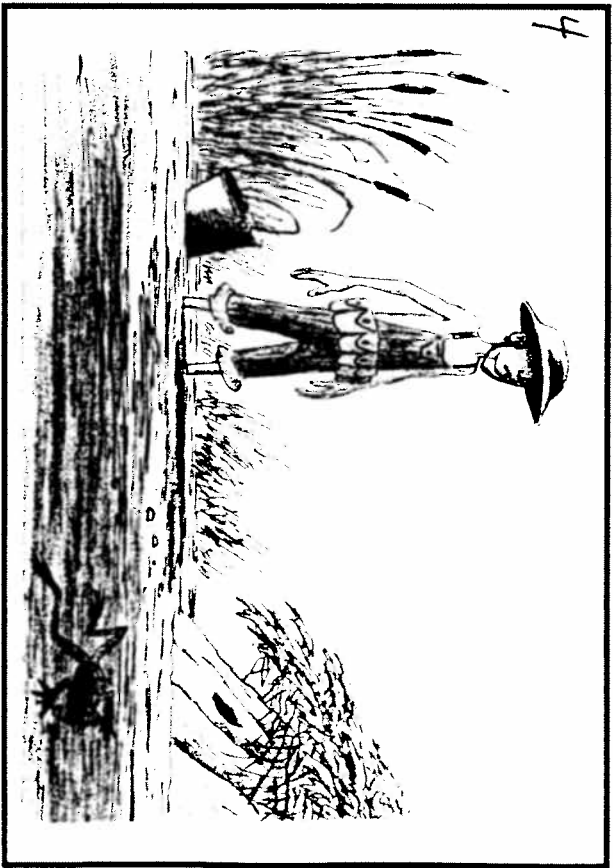
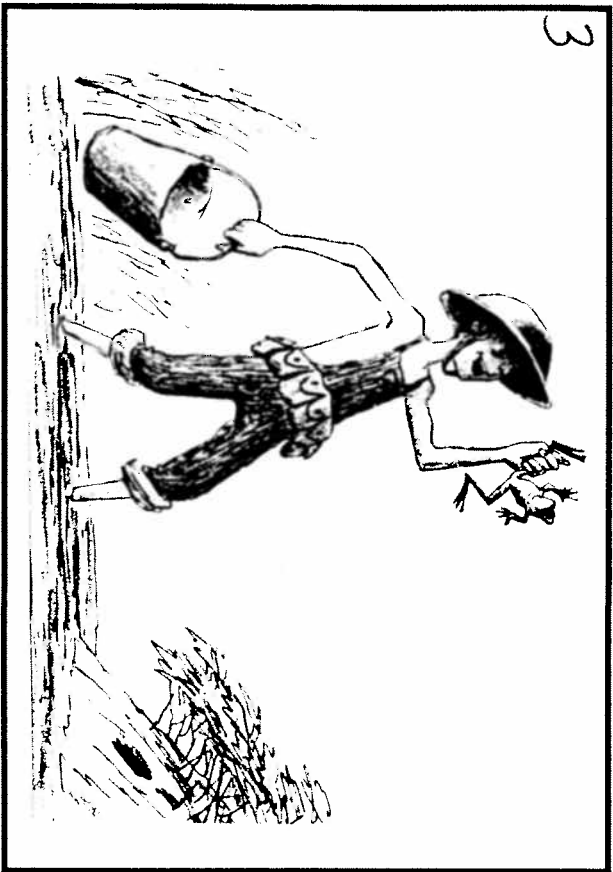
In one quick grab I had him by a hind leg. Then, at the same instant, a snake shot out of a hole in the bank and seized the frog by the head.

Suddenly we were having a frantic tug of war with the frog caught in the middle.

It was touch and go until I finally jerked the frog free. Then in a flash the snake was back in his hole.

I thought sure I had saved the frog from certain death until I plopped him back into the water and he went drifting downstream limp and lifeless.

The snake was a deadly poisonous water moccasin, and his fangs had punctured the poor frog. All I had done was cheat the snake out of his lunch.



Magnified Moment Brainstorming

- ♦ Make the moment last as long as you can
- ♦ The more detail you use the more the reader will be drawn into your story

Here's the exercise:

To begin, ask yourself: What is the ***BIG*** moment? Now ...

1. Close your eyes and think of 5 detail about your moment.
2. Open your eyes and write down the 5 quick details.
3. Turn to a partner and ask each other questions about each detail to make it more specific.
4. Add these new details to your original list.
5. Freewrite by starting with your favorite detail and see where that detail leads you!

Memories

18

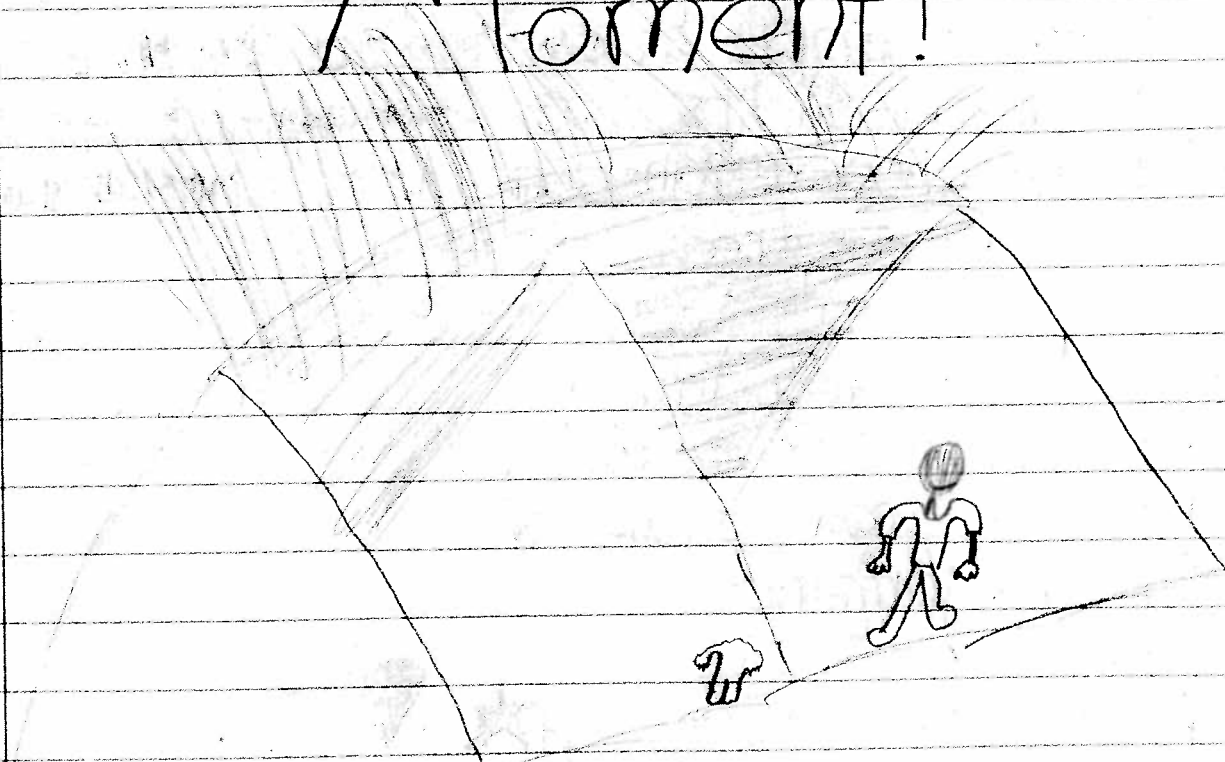
1-9-08

- #1 Wrestling - B-day
- #2 Name - stairs
- #3 Neighbor - mean - hate their house - rude build #5.
- #4 Run away tree
- #5 Kiyote - Ate dog
- #6 D&J - sliding, diving.
- #7 No roller coaster
- #8 snap snap clap - No.
- #9 No jumping
- #10 Climb tree
- #11 ★ Dune 45 - sunrise ★ ♥
- #12 ★ Victoria Falls - Hotel - sketch - 2
- #13 1st time brother nearly ran friend over
- #14 Dune jumping - 3
- #15 ★ Dune 45 - Falling down - #4 ★
- #16 Surfing - dolphins
- #17 Mash - making
- #18 Sister school - trouble - not in class
- #19 Homeschooling S.A. - 5
- #20 lion - wild - SA - Jeep - Eating - 6
- #21 Turtle ate all fish - 29

Car - Vacations - Trips - Train - Plane 1 - 9 H.W.

- #1 - 6 - c - 7 - Eifel tower - 8 - London eye -
- 9 - dungeons - 10 - Canoe - Tubing - 11 - riding
- ostrich - 12 - stand ostrich eggs - 13 - sader sand Trap

What IS The BIG Moment?



- ① Blue Pink sky
- ② Mountains sandy.
- ③ Meerkat next to me
- ④ Sunrise
- ⑤ Yellow sand

* looked like lava lamp not moving, before sun
 2 = ~~Yellow~~ Brown sand = Hill opposite me
 3 = meerkat standing, sniffing air
 4 = Peered over the mountains,
 5 = Yellow sand - I was on mountain

Sunrise Dune 45

H.W

1-10-08

I peered at the sky, and blue and Pink was all over. It was as if it was a lava lamp. It was even all mixed up, although it wasn't moving it looked as though it was lifeless and just a picture, an image, a work of art. I even, for a split second, the pink was the clouds, and the blue was the sun, and it's light. I was all just so rad, that I took a hard pause, and said, "I am so very lucky that I get a once in a lifetime chance to do this."

Q.O.T.W

"We do not remember days;
we remember moments."

Traits OF A Magnified
Moment

- 1-Write small
- 2-Write in first person
- 3-Showing writing
- 4-Use dialogue
- 5-Shows thinking and emotion.
- 6-Strong lead and ending
- 7-builds suspense
- 8-Appeals senses

Tips for Exploding a Moment

So, how do you explode a moment? Try using these tools to help you.

Snapshots: Physical pictures

Thoughtshots: What's going on in your head?

Dialogue: What are people saying?

Zooming in: Ask yourself questions to dig up small details to make a moment come alive.

Outside/Inside: Switch between Snapshots and Thoughtshots to make your moment last longer.

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Numb fear. This was all I felt. as I lay on the table in that cold, heartless room. I watched in dismay as horrible, bloody scenes burned themselves on the insides of my eyelids. The thought of surgery brought a cold chill right down to my bones. Suddenly, a cool hand rested gently on my forehead. I looked up, gazing at the hands' owner. I had forgotten about the white robed menaces.

"Calm down, breathe," they coaxed as the anesthesiologist held the gas mask close to my mouth. I immediately clamped down my mouth tightly as an activated fox trap.

"No. I won't. You can't make me!" I screeched through clenched teeth, not bothering to wipe away the fresh flow of tears cascading down my cheeks.

I glanced nervously at the enormous monitor that had wires running from it like the intricate veins of a leaf. "It's O.K. We won't let anything happen to you while you are out," reassured the doctor and his assistant.

Despite my desperate wails, the doctors clamped on the mask and took my first breathe of the gas, its sharp tangy scent burning in my nostrils.

"Very good, breathe," the doctors crooned.

"I have no choice, the mask is covering my mouth and my nose," I muttered hazily. "What's happening? Why is everything so foggy?" I asked nervously.

"Just the anesthesia doing its job," replied one of the nurses.

I began to breathe freely while the room and everything in it, from the people, to the white sterile curtains, to the harsh, surgical scent of the operating room faded dimly away. I took one last breath and everything spun into blackness.

Magnified Moment Leads

Author John McPhee says, "The lead is the flashlight that shines into a story."

Numb fear. This was all I felt, as I lay on the table in that cold, heartless room.

My heart pounded faster and faster as my family stood on the beach and watched the sky fill with clouds as if they were hiding a menacing secret.

The second I stepped into the car, I sensed something was wrong.

Pressure, major, major pressure. Here I am, it's the fifth inning, and I'm one of the youngest pitchers in the league, facing the best team in the majors.

"What on earth could that be?" I asked my grandma as I pointed at something floating lifelessly down stream.

I pedaled the board faster and faster, approached the stairs and kicked it into overdrive.

I never realized taking a picture could be so dangerous.

"I could fall off this ski lift," I thought as I gawked at the snow-covered slope.

I'm ticklish. That's the one thing my best friend, Alex, didn't know about me.

Magnified Moment Evaluation Checklist
One place, One Time

Name of Piece _____

Lead

- ☐ **Starts in moment**
- ☐ **Uses an effective strategy to grab reader's attention**

Events unfold slowly through

- ☐ **Tension/suspense**
- ☐ **Actions**

Moment is a snapshot

- ☐ **Makes a physical picture (reader can see a picture)**
- ☐ **Small details make the moment come alive**
- ☐ **Uses showing writing**

Moment is a thoughtshot

- ☐ **Reader knows what's going on in the writer's head**

Closing

- ☐ **Stays in moment**
- ☐ **Satisfies reader**

Score this way:

1 = Some of the time or not at all

2 = Most of the time

3 = Consistently (all the time, throughout the whole piece)

Comments:

Magnified Moment Rubric

Story takes place in one place, at one time

1 2 3 4

Story makes sense and events are in logical order

1 2 3 4

Story is told in first person and shows thinking and emotions of author

1 2 3 4

Author has a strong lead and strong ending

1 2 3 4

Author uses showing writing

1 2 3 4

Author appeals to the senses

1 2 3 4

Author uses correct spelling, punctuation and grammar

1 2 3 4